

Division of Consumer Affairs

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## News Release

### STUDENTS TO TEST THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF CONSUMER ISSUES IN STATE COMPETITION

The Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs is launching an exciting new program for teenagers across the state. *LifeSmarts...the ultimate consumer challenge* is a unique educational game created by the National Coalition for Consumer Education (NCCE) and sponsored locally by the Division which teaches students about consumer issues.

Dozens of states are involved in the program, however, the Tennessee competition will be the only program managed online. The Internet is the most efficient way for the Division to reach each high school student in the state of Tennessee. Since the Department of Education has launched the *ConnectTEN* program, students will not only be able to access the program at home but in their schools as well.

"Although high school students spend billions of dollars each year, studies show they are uneducated consumers. Since consumer education empowers people to take responsibility for themselves, this lack of knowledge is potentially dangerous. On the other hand, when people know where to go for good information, how to make informed decisions and how to exercise rights and responsibilities, everyone wins," said Mark Williams, director of the Division of Consumer Affairs.

The students who choose to participate will complete a series of tests online. The highest scoring students from each school will form a team to represent their school. In March 1998, the highest scoring teams will come to the state competitions in Nashville. Winners of the state finals will then represent their school and state in the regional and national competitions in Phoenix, AZ in April. Students will receive prizes for outstanding achievements throughout the program.

The Division wants to encourage all high school students to take advantage of this opportunity. While becoming knowledgeable and responsible consumers, students will develop leadership skills, discover career possibilities, meet new people and win prizes.

The Division has created this *LifeSmarts* website for Tennesseans. This site displays details about the program, gives students an opportunity to sign up, and links to the national *LifeSmarts* site. Here you can gain insight to the competition on the state and national levels.

Students should sign up for the program now. They may participate in the testing between January 5 and January 30, 1998.

The National Coalition for Consumer Education (NCCE) is a non-profit partnership of professionals from both the public and private sectors. Located in Madison, NJ, NCCE has been promoting consumer education since 1981. NCCE and state coordinators work together using innovative ideas to improve consumer knowledge across the country.

Nationwide financial support for the program is provided by MCI Telecommunications Corporation. MCI, headquartered in Washington, D.C. and the nation's second largest long distance service provider,

has sponsored *LifeSmarts* for the past two years. Many locally based corporations will support the statewide competition.

Anyone interested in learning more about the *LifeSmarts* program may call the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs at 1.800.342.8385.